

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN PROVINCIAL AMERICA

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Three should enable the student to understand:

1. The disagreement among historians concerning the origins of slavery.
2. The sources of colonial labor, including indentured servants, women, and imported Africans.
3. Immigration patterns and their effect on colonial development.
4. How patterns of birth and death influenced and reflected cultural development in the colonies.
5. The ways in which factors of soil and climate determined the commercial and agricultural development of the colonies, despite crown attempts to influence production.
6. The emergence of the plantation system, and its impact on southern society.
7. The New England witchcraft episode as a reflection of the Puritan society.
8. The reasons for the appearance of a variety of religious sects in the colonies, and the effect of the Great Awakening on the colonists.
9. The beginnings of colonial industry and commerce, and the early attempts at regulation by Parliament.
10. The ways in which colonial literature, education, science, law, and justice were diverging from their English antecedents.

Main Themes

1. How the colonial population grew and diversified.
2. How the colonial economy expanded to meet the needs of this rapidly growing population.
3. The emergence of a particularly American "mind and spirit."

Glossary

1. Enlightenment: The intellectual movement that dominated the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. Believing that the universe operated through natural laws that human beings, using their powers of reason, could understand, "enlightened" thinkers argued that once these laws were understood, people could devise means of living within them. Also called the "Age of Reason," this era was marked by an explosion of activity that brought about significant advances in science (especially natural science), education, and government. Stressing that there were certain "natural rights" (life, liberty, and property) that were given to all people—and that it was the duty of government to protect these rights from selfish individuals (those not allowing reason to control their actions)—philosophers of this age called forth many of the principles that Americans later used in their struggle with Britain. From the Enlightenment came the beliefs that freedom is the natural condition of humanity, that governments should be responsible to the governed, and that it is the right of the people to oppose a government that violates the natural rights of its citizens.
2. slavery: A legal status in which an individual is owned by another individual who controls his or her actions and benefits from his or her labor. The status is for life (unless altered by the owner) and is inherited, usually through the mother.

3. class structure: The division of society into recognizable groups. Generally based on wealth, these divisions are also affected by education, family ties, religion, and a variety of other factors recognized by the society in which the divisions exist.
4. paper money in the colonies: In an effort to overcome the lack of money in America, some colonial governments issued paper money to serve as currency. The problem, however, was to get the colonists to accept these paper bills at face value. So, to keep the bills from declining in value, some colonies employed a system (currency finance) in which paper money would be issued for only a specific purpose (for example, to buy goods that the government needed, to pay for services to the government, and so on) and would be accepted by the government, at face value, as payment for taxes or other debts owed to the colony. It was generally hoped that this would be the only exchange and that the money would not circulate; but if it did, the fact that the government would accept it as full payment was believed to be enough to keep it from depreciating greatly. In practice, however, the system did not work. The bills lost their value as they circulated, creating the inflation that opponents of paper money feared. Nevertheless, under a more controlled situation, the concept was indeed workable and, with some changes, is used today.
5. staple crop: The primary export (cash) crop of a region, the crop on which the region's economy rests. In the Chesapeake colonies, the staple was tobacco; farther south, it was rice or indigo. In later years, sugar (the staple in the Indies) was important in some areas on the mainland, but in time the classic staple—cotton—came to dominate the South's economy.
6. evangelicalism: The adherence to the belief that salvation comes through the personal recognition of one's sins, the awareness of one's inability to save oneself, and the acceptance of Christ as the only means of redemption. The process is usually a highly emotional one that culminates in the rebirth ("born again" state) of the sinner and his or her acceptance as one of the evangelical community of believers. The evangelical emphasis on the spiritual rather than the worldly was particularly appealing to the lower classes and to others (for example, women and slaves) who sought a means to affirm their personal worth. This often put evangelicals at odds with their social "betters," who regarded the evangelicals' rejection of those things that defined the social classes (fine dress, leisure activities, civil and religious ceremonies, and such) as an attack on the status and authority of ruling elites.
7. nuclear family: The social unit composed of father, mother, and children.
8. patriarchal: Having to do with a social system in which the father is the head of the family.

Pertinent Questions

THE COLONIAL POPULATION (66-77)

1. Explain the system of indentured servitude that developed in the American colonies. Why was it such an "appealing" system?
2. What impact did freed indentures have on colonial sociopolitical development?
3. Why did most indentures go to Pennsylvania and New York after 1700?
4. What factors contributed to the rapid increase in colonial population during the last half of the seventeenth century?
5. Explain the results that the limited extent of medical knowledge had on colonial society. Who benefited from this limitation?
6. How did the importance of reproduction in the labor-scarce society of colonial America affect the status and life cycle of women? How and why did the status of women in colonial America differ from region to region?

7. Describe the steps that led to the establishment of black slavery in the English-American colonies.
8. Why are the 1690s considered a "turning point in the history of the black population in America"? What had this change resulted in by 1760?
9. Explain the commerce in slaves—how it grew so extensive, more sophisticated, and more horrible.
10. What were the major non-English groups to migrate to America, and why did they come?
11. What were the general characteristics of the colonial population in the first half of the eighteenth century—its rate of growth, cultural composition, settlement patterns?

THE COLONIAL ECONOMIES (77-83)

12. Describe the economy of the Chesapeake region, and explain why it developed as it did.
13. How did the economy of South Carolina and Georgia differ from that of the Chesapeake? How was it similar?
14. Explain the commercial economy that emerged in the northern colonies alongside the agricultural one. What role did technology play in this?
15. What were the limits of colonial technology? Just how self-sufficient were American colonists?
16. What factors gave rise to colonial commercial enterprises? What obstacles did these enterprises have to overcome and what effect did their success have on the colonial economy?
17. What was the "triangular trade," and what does it reveal about colonial economics? How was this a response to British mercantile policies?
18. Explain the growing preoccupation with consumption of material goods in the British colonies and how this preoccupation was associated with social status.

PATTERNS OF SOCIETY (83-89)

19. How did the plantation system in the American South illustrate both the differences between the colonial and English class systems and the way in which colonial communities evolved in response to local conditions?
20. What were the characteristics of plantation slavery?
21. Describe the plantation as an economic unit; as a social unit.
22. What were the characteristics of communities that emerged in Puritan New England?
23. How was the family central to the Puritan community?
24. How did the experience of America affect the patriarchal family?
25. How did the witchcraft hysteria of the 1680s and 1690s result from a "gap between the expectations of a united community and the reality of a diverse and divided one"?
26. What forces gave rise to colonial "cities"?
27. Describe the "distinctive features" of urban life in colonial America.

AWAKENINGS AND ENLIGHTENMENTS (89-96)

28. What were the two powerful forces competing for the American mind in the eighteenth century?
29. What were the major religious groups in the colonies, what elements formed them, and where were they located?
30. What was the Great Awakening? Who brought it about, and what groups supported or opposed it?
31. What were the effects of the Great Awakening?
32. What was the Enlightenment? How did it differ from the Great Awakening?
33. What colonial colleges were in operation by 1763? Why was each founded, and what subjects were studied in the mid-eighteenth century?
34. What evidence was there that the influence of the Enlightenment was spreading in America?
35. Explain the working of the law in colonial America—the concepts on which it was based and the way it functioned.
- 36.

WHERE HISTORIANS DISAGREE (72-73)

36. How have historians differed over how and why white Americans created a system of slave labor in the seventeenth century?
37. Explain the debate among historians over how and why it was determined that people of African descent should be slaves in America?

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE

38. Why was it said of almanacs that “no book we read (except the Bible) is so much valued and so serviceable to the community?”
39. In colonial America, what needs did the almanacs fill?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. "seasoning"
2. middle passage
3. Royal African Company
4. "slave codes"
5. Scotch-Irish
6. Eliza Lucas
7. the Saugus works
8. Peter Hasenclever
9. Charles Carroll of Carrollton
10. Gullah

11. town meeting
12. "visible saints"
13. primogeniture
14. Salem, Massachusetts
15. George Whitefield
16. Jonathan Edwards
17. New Lights/Old Lights
18. "dame schools"
19. Cotton Mather
20. John Peter Zenger

Document 1

In the eighteenth century, slavery was hardly out of the ordinary. It existed in various forms throughout the world, and in Britain's North American colonies, it flourished. What was out of the ordinary was that after centuries of relative silence, around the mid-eighteenth century, people began to speak out against the system. Read the following extract, taken from John Woolman's 1762 work, Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes. Woolman was a Quaker. What was it in Quaker theology that might have moved him to take such a stand, and how is this revealed in what he wrote? What argument other than religion does the author offer against slavery? How might slavery be seen as harmful to society as a whole? Do you think that Woolman's appeal moved the slaveholder? Why or why not?

If we seriously consider that liberty is the right of innocent men; that the mighty God is a refuge for the oppressed; that in reality we are indebted to them; that they being set free, are still liable to the penalties of our laws, and as likely to have punishment for their crimes as other people: this may answer all our objections. And to retain them in perpetual servitude, without just cause for it, will produce effects, in the event, more grievous than setting them free would do, when a real love to truth and equity was the motive to it. . . .

He that hath a servant, made so wrongfully, and knows it to be so, when he treats him otherwise than a free man, when he reaps the benefit of his labor, without paying him such wages as are reasonably due to free men for the like service, clothes excepted; these things, though done in calmness, without any shew of disorder, do yet deprave the mind in like manner, and with as great certainty as prevailing cold congeals water. These steps taken by masters, and their conduct striking the minds of their children, whilst young, leave less room for that which is good to work upon them. The customs of their parents, their neighbors, and the people with whom they converse, working upon their minds; and they, from thence, conceiving ideas of things, and modes of conduct, the entrance into their heart becomes, in a great measure, shut up against the gentle movings of uncreated purity.

Negroes are our fellow creatures, and their present condition amongst us requires our serious consideration. We know not the time when those scales in which mountains are weighed may turn. The Parent of mankind is gracious; His care is over His smallest creatures; and a multitude of men escape not His notice. And though many of them are trodden down, and despised, yet He remembers them; He seeth their affliction, and looketh upon the spreading, increasing exaltation of the oppressor. He turns the channels of power, humbles the most haughty people, and gives deliverance to the oppressed, at such periods as are consistent with His infinite justice and goodness. And wherever gain is preferred to equity, and wrong things publicly encouraged, to that degree that wickedness takes root, and spreads wide amongst the inhabitants of a country, there is real cause for sorrow to all such

3. By violating the Navigation Acts and developing their own trading patterns, were the American colonies creating their own mercantile system? Discuss this question and the implications it might have for future relations with England.
4. What role did religion play in the advance of education in America? In what way did religion also hinder education? After assessing these two relationships, show the extent to which the fruits of education (reading, writing, science, and law) flourished in America; at the same time, show how these helped to form a character that was "American."

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response which best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. During the seventeenth century, at least three-fourths of the immigrants who came to the Chesapeake colonies came as:
 - a. slaves.
 - b. artisans.
 - c. indentured servants.
 - d. convicts.
2. The high mortality rate in the colonies had the effect of:
 - a. weakening the traditional patriarchal family structure..
 - b. creating significant labor shortages in New England.
 - c. making it difficult for women to find husbands.
 - d. keeping the birth rate low.
3. In the Puritan colonies, the principal economic and religious unit in the community was the:
 - a. family.
 - b. meeting house.
 - c. town meetings.
 - d. small farm.
4. The mid-1690s marked a turning point in the history of the black population in America because:
 - a. planters from Barbados came to Carolina.
 - b. slavery was introduced in Georgia.
 - c. Massachusetts and Rhode Island abolished slavery.
 - d. the Royal Africa Company lost its monopoly.
5. The one factor which determined whether a person was subject to the slave codes in the British American colonies was:
 - a. their country of origin.
 - b. the ancestry of their father.
 - c. the ancestry of their mother.
 - d. their African ancestry.

6. Historian Edmund S. Morgan argued that the institutionalization of African slavery in America reflected:
 - a. an effort by colonial governments to attract more white indentured servants by offering them a relatively high status.
 - b. the deep seated racism that white settlers had brought with them.
 - c. white fears of black resistance or even revolt.
 - d. economic and social needs for an easily recruited and controlled labor force.
7. The most numerous of the non-English immigrants were the:
 - a. Scotch-Irish.
 - b. Pennsylvania Dutch.
 - c. French Huguenots.
 - d. Scottish Highlanders.
8. Which of the following was not one of the reasons that Africans were so valuable to planters along the Carolina and Georgia coasts?
 - a. They could be forced to do work that white laborers refused to do.
 - b. They often came from rice-producing regions of Africa.
 - c. They were more accustomed to the hot and humid climate.
 - d. They could be counted on to work the fields without protest.
9. Conditions for agriculture were good in Pennsylvania because of the:
 - a. cold weather and rocky soil.
 - b. concentration of land ownership and the maintenance of great estates.
 - c. success of German immigrants in applying European methods of intensive cultivation.
 - d. oversupply of single male workers.
10. A common problem in American commerce in the seventeenth century was:
 - a. the lack of a commonly accepted currency.
 - b. an insufficient number of ships to carry colonial goods.
 - c. too many large companies in every colony.
 - d. a small, unprofitable coastal trade.
11. The maze of highly diverse trade routes that involved the buying and selling of rum, slaves, and sugar was known as the:
 - a. staple system.
 - b. triangular trade.
 - c. middle passage.
 - d. Atlantic highway.
12. During the seventeenth century, colonial plantations were:
 - a. rough and relatively small.
 - b. English country estates on a smaller scale.
 - c. seats of an entrenched, landholding aristocracy.
 - d. insignificant in the colonial economy.
13. African slaves in the colonial South:
 - a. were rigidly separated from whites.
 - b. were widely scattered on small farms, seldom in contact with one another.

- c. often participated in various forms of organized resistance.
 - d. began to develop a society and culture of their own.
14. The characteristic social unit in New England was the:
- a. isolated farm.
 - b. meeting house.
 - c. town.
 - d. plantation.
15. In colonial New England, tensions between expectations of a cohesive, united community and the reality of an increasingly diverse and fluid one led to:
- a. a general economic decline.
 - b. the witch trials.
 - c. a decline in piety.
 - d. the rise of the merchant class.
16. Which of the following was not a function of a colonial American city?
- a. They were trading centers.
 - b. They were centers of industry.
 - c. They were intellectual centers.
 - d. They were areas of few social distinctions.
17. In matters of religion, Americans were:
- a. less tolerant than their English counterparts.
 - b. more tolerant than their English counterparts.
 - c. more inclined to be members of an Anglican congregation.
 - d. unconcerned about piety, especially in New England.
18. Which of the following was not a reason for the decline of piety in colonial America?
- a. Denominationalism.
 - b. Rise of towns.
 - c. Corrupt ministers.
 - d. The importation of Enlightenment ideas.
19. The Great Awakening was:
- a. an effort to alert colonists to British efforts to control them politically.
 - b. the way the Enlightenment influenced American education.
 - c. the opening of new commercial opportunities in the West.
 - d. the first great American revival.
20. During the first half of the eighteenth century, colonial legislatures were generally:
- a. able to act independently of Parliament.
 - b. controlled by the governor.
 - c. free from class distinctions.
 - d. a reflection of democracy in their respective colonies.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

1. After the 1650s, natural increase became the most important source of population growth in New England.
2. In colonial America few women remained unmarried for long.
3. The survival rate for children was higher in the South than in any other section.
4. Because women were scarce in colonial America, they were not bound by patriarchal authority.
5. The "middle passage" was the route taken by settlers trying to get to the Ohio Valley.
6. Africans were enslaved from the time of their arrival.
7. The earliest non-English European immigrants to arrive in the British-American colonies were the Huguenots.
8. Between 1700 and 1775 the colonial population increased from under 300,000 to over 2 million.
9. During the colonial era most colonists were self-sufficient farmers.
10. The largest industrial enterprise in English North America employed fewer than 100 workers.
11. Although colonial urban centers were small, most of the activities associated with cities were carried out there.
12. A great landowner in colonial America was powerful on his estate, but generally had no influence beyond the boundary of his property.
13. Southern society was fluid and therefore not highly stratified.
14. There were no significant slave rebellions during the colonial era.
15. The rigid patriarchal structure of the Puritan family limited opportunities for younger male members to strike out on their own.
16. In New England, what happened at Salem was unique because very few Puritans believed in witches.
17. During the colonial era there was a growing preoccupation with the consumption of material goods and these possessions were directly associated with social status.
18. With access to "dame schools," American women enjoyed a higher degree of literacy than did men.
19. Most of the early colleges in America were started for religious reasons.
20. In the John Peter Zenger case, the court held that criticism of the government was not libelous if factually true.